

WASHINGTON, DC – Virginia Senators Jim Webb and Mark Warner and Congressmen Glenn Nye, Jim Moran, Randy Forbes, Bobby Scott, and Rob Wittman yesterday sent a letter to Secretary of the Air Force Michael Donley and Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Norman Schwartz advocating the assignment of an additional F-22 Raptor squadron at Langley Air Force Base (LAFB). A decision by the Air Force is expected soon.

“We believe that Langley Air Force Base is the best-value alternative for the Air Force and the taxpayer,” wrote the Senators and Congressmen. They stressed that such a move would be consistent with President Obama’s June 2010 memorandum to make better use of existing federal real estate and avoid redundant excess assets. At a time when Secretary Gates has directed the military departments to achieve more than \$10 billion in programmatic savings, LAFB can accommodate the third squadron with minimal cost and personnel.

Following last year’s decision to curtail acquisition at 187 F-22s, there were insufficient numbers for all bases scheduled to receive the aircraft. As a result, the Air Force initiated a study to determine how best to consolidate the F-22 fleet from four to three locations. The review is currently being conducted by a Senior Basing Executive Steering Group, which is expected to forward its recommendations to Air Force leadership this week.

Three operational F-22 squadrons were originally slated for LAFB, and approximately \$95 million was appropriated to construct three hangars specially designed for them. Due to reductions, only two of Langley’s new hangars currently house F-22 aircraft. The third will be vacated this September when an F-15 squadron is retired. Langley’s operational capacity and modern infrastructure would enable operations with a third F-22 squadron to commence almost immediately.

The text of the letter is below:

The Honorable Michael Donley
Secretary of the Air Force
1670 Air Force Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20330

General Norman Schwartz, USAF
Chief of Staff of the Air Force
1670 Air Force Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20330

Dear Secretary Donley and General Schwartz,

Our purpose in writing is to ask that Langley Air Force Base (LAFB), Virginia, be given all due consideration among the four candidate bases currently under consideration as recipients of an additional F-22 Raptor squadron. For a number of important reasons, we believe that Langley Air Force Base is the best-value alternative for the Air Force and the taxpayer.

The need for an updated beddown plan for the F-22 is necessitated largely by the curtailment of the Raptor program at 187 aircraft. As you are aware, the original F-22A beddown structure for Langley AFB called for the assignment of three squadrons composed of 24 primary assigned aircraft (PAA).

To implement this plan at LAFB, the Air Force was appropriated approximately \$95 million to build the facilities necessary for squadron operations and support. These military construction projects included three fully mission capable aircraft hangars specifically designed for the F-22. Two of these hangars currently house F-22s. The third will be vacated this September following the retirement of an F-15 squadron, resulting in excess operational capacity and modern facilities.

A number of additional projects will further improve LAFB's ability to host a third squadron and should be considered during the rebasing review. The President's fiscal year 2011 budget request included \$8.8 million to build a Low Observable Hangar/Maintenance Facility. This project has already been approved by the Senate Committee on Appropriations and the House Military Construction and Veteran Affairs Appropriations Subcommittee and included in their spending bills. The House has also authorized and appropriated \$3 million to purchase land in Langley's "clear zone." These land purchases will improve the air space quality and safety around LAFB. Additionally, \$3 million has been authorized to provide shelters to protect the F-22s and enable maintenance on the ramp during inclement weather.

Langley also hosts one of the most experienced Air National Guard squadrons in the nation. As members of the initial cadre of the first operational F-22 squadron and the first Guard unit to fly the F-22, the 192nd Fighter Wing's operational achievements and depth of technical knowledge of the aircraft are unparalleled. The assignment of a third F-22 squadron will help to preserve that unit's identity, sustain personnel retention, and expand leadership opportunities in ways that exist today in other states. Langley is uniquely poised to move into an Active Associate model to provide even more flexibility.

With the importance of the Air Sovereignty Mission, Langley is well-positioned as an operational base with full command-and-control and mission-support facilities. Unlike other locations which are unable to conduct operational missions, Langley will not require additional construction or manning to make it an operational base. In short, owing to past investments, Langley is a "turn-key" installation that can commence operations with a third F-22 squadron almost immediately.

We believe that President Obama's June 10, 2010, memorandum titled, "Disposing of Unneeded Federal Real Estate – Increasing Sales Proceeds, Cutting Operating Costs, and Improving Energy Efficiency," should guide your F-22 basing decision. The President's memo states, "For decades, the federal government ... has managed more real estate than necessary

to effectively support its programs and missions. Both taxpayer dollars and energy resources are being wasted to maintain these excess assets Agencies shall also take immediate steps to make better use of remaining real property assets as measured by utilization and occupancy rates, annual operating cost, energy efficiency, and sustainability.”

Secretary of Defense Gates has directed the Department of Defense and military departments to find savings of more than \$10 billion in future budgets. He recently said, "Given America's difficult economic circumstances and parlous fiscal condition, military spending on things large and small can and should expect closer, harsher scrutiny.” Langley is ready now to accept a third operational F-22 squadron—a superb opportunity for the Air Force to demonstrate sound fiscal discipline by making better use of its existing facilities with attendant cost savings for the taxpayer.

In closing, the consolidation of this critical national asset at one of the premier fighter bases in the Air Force would vastly improve efficiencies in maintenance and operations of the F-22 fleet overall, as well as allow Langley’s active and Air National Guard components to operate together more effectively in the performance of their homeland defense and overseas contingency missions.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Senator Mark Warner
Senator Jim Webb
Representative Glenn Nye
Representative James Moran
Representative Randy Forbes
Representative Bobby Scott
Representative Rob Wittman

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